

BOOK REVIEW

New England's Mountain Flowers: A High Country Heritage by J. Wallner and M. J. DiGregorio. 1997. xiii + 221 pp. illus. ISBN 0-87842-337-0 \$17.00 (paper). Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula, MT (in cooperation with the New England Wild Flower Society).

This book is intended to attract and hold the attention of people who may simply enjoy the beauty of flowers or are beginning a deeper interest in plants. While readers are admiring the handsome full page photographs, the informal text on the facing page introduces different botanical and ecological concepts, in addition to information on the species illustrated. The introduction packs in much information on botanical exploration of New England, particularly the northern regions, conservation efforts, and geology and its major role in forming different habitats which enable the diversity of plant communities to flourish. The book is not intended to serve as a field guide, but more as an enticement to the deeper knowledge of plants.

Eighty-five of the showiest wild flowers are grouped into habitat categories of Forest Slopes, Streambanks and Ponds, Bogs and Fens, Cliffs, Ledges and Talus Slopes, The Alpine Zone, Alien Species, and Rare and Endangered Flowers. The title is a little misleading as many of the species are lowland inhabitants. Each section has an informative introduction which discusses the unique characteristics of each habitat. One of the main themes throughout the book is the plant's need of specific conditions to survive. Conservation of habitat equals, possibly, conservation of the plant. Aspects of rarity are discussed in the Rare and Endangered Flowers section, where seven of the very rarest plants are included.

Text opposite each photograph covers a multitude of subjects, from lore, uses, ecology, pollination, conservation, role of soils and nutrients, associated species and characteristics of certain plant families, to evolution and aesthetics. The excitement of botanizing, exploration, and discovery and even the fun of drive-by botany, are stressed.

The inclusion of six alien species is somewhat mysterious, although it gives the authors a chance to expand on the beauty but also the dangers of introduced species. The cheerful yellow of

coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) is enjoyed by all, but how many will come upon grecian foxglove (*Digitalis lanata*)? Two photos of garden lupine (*Lupinus polyphyllus*, *L. nootkatensis*) seem a waste of valuable space that could have been dedicated to another rare native species.

The purposes of this book are important: raising people's awareness of the beauty of our native plants, broadening their enjoyment, encouraging their powers of observation, and stressing the plants' need of wild, undisturbed habitat. The book should be made available to those in charge of our vast public lands. In accomplishing these goals, it should take its place in the struggle to save our natural environments.

—PAMELA B. WEATHERBEE, 236 Sweetbrook Rd., Williamstown, MA 01267.